

Waterfront Enhancement Strategy

Eastern Baltimore County Revitalization Strategy



Waterfront Enhancement

Eastern Baltimore County possesses an asset found nowhere else in the County... more than 170 miles of shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal tributaries. By its very nature, this is an exclusive amenity that should attract higher-end residential and commercial development and redevelopment. However, a number of private and public land use decisions in the past have limited and/or precluded some of these opportunities. Much of Eastern Baltimore County was developed during World War II when the emphasis was on industrial development (which often needed water access) and housing for factory workers. Significant portions of the rural shoreline areas were also subdivided into narrow 50 ft. wide lots for "shorefront cottages" used as summer fishing and vacation sites and later developed into permanent year-round residences. Additionally, governmental land use decisions to locate a sewage treatment plant and a landfill near the headwaters of Back River degraded the air and water quality of the surrounding area.

To many, especially outsiders, the resultant image of the Baltimore County waterfront is not as positive as it should be. Eastern Baltimore County's waterfront communities are friendly and close-knit and still have the traditional neighborhood values that seem lost in other areas. Added to the often remarkably beautiful views and easy access to the Bay, this enables most waterfront houses to command prices of over \$200,000. This area also possesses unique "quality of life" amenities such as some of the most diverse and interesting parks in the County, over 60 marinas, public beaches, and the quickest access to the Chesapeake Bay. A more positive image will cause potential businesses, residents, and tourists to look closer and discover for themselves the

unique advantages of living, working, and recreating in Eastern Baltimore County.

POLICY

There are a number of distinct opportunities to enhance the waterfront and thus, the image of Eastern Baltimore County. This will require concerted efforts by all governmental agencies, local citizens and businesses, and the private development sector. As public policy, the County should: 1) promote and facilitate the development and redevelopment of vacant or deteriorated waterfront parcels for "upscale" projects that would improve the image of the area; 2) promote and facilitate a special waterfront destination project; 3) capitalize upon the waterfront parks and recreational opportunities as an attraction from both water and land, and 4) promote the development of smaller waterfront destination points along the shoreline that offer commercial and recreational amenities.

WATERFRONT DESTINATION

Baltimore County's waterfront needs to be a destination, from both the water and the land. It's the Eastern area's best asset and a wonderful attraction for residents and visitors alike. Different and inviting points of arrival and departure are needed in distinct places along the waterfront. People, be they boaters or land-based weekend day trippers, need an interesting "port of call" to entice them into an area. On a grand scale, Baltimore City has the Inner



Harbor and Annapolis has its own pier and the associated attractions of the town itself. On a smaller, but nonetheless very successful scale are Rock Hall and Kent Narrows with their marinas, shops, and restaurants. Even smaller nearby attractions are needed for local boaters and residents along the waterfront. These destination sites can improve the local economy, heighten the waterfront experience, and present a positive image of Eastern Baltimore County.

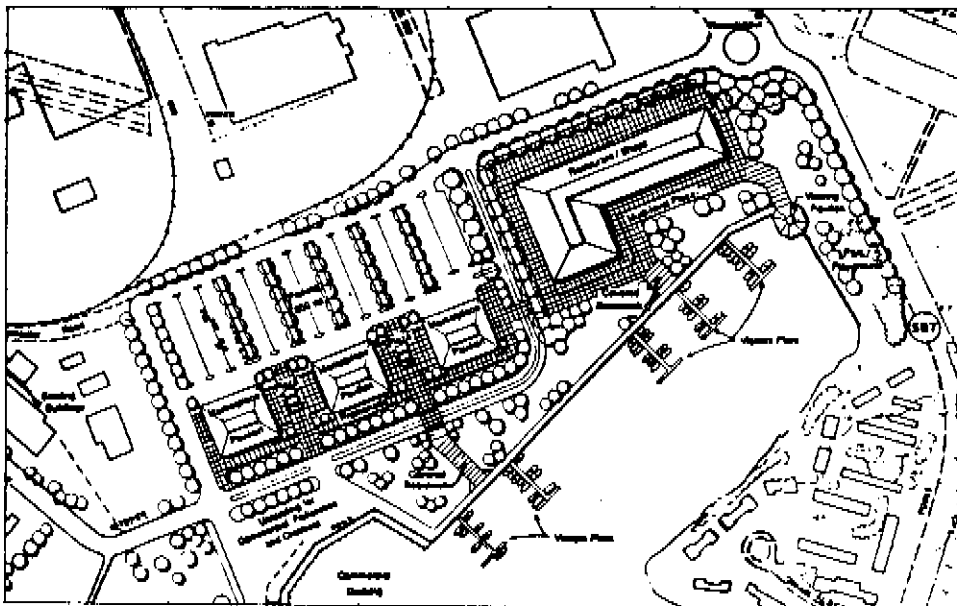
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Develop a Mixed Use Destination Complex

Baltimore County should fashion its own niche in the tourism trade by jointly developing or facilitating the development of a significant destination such as a convention and conference center. This could be linked to a cultural heritage museum and a water-oriented marketplace of small shops, restaurants, docking facilities, and a public commons for picnics and gatherings. This concept would

mix a number of different uses that could appeal to a variety of groups on both a permanent and seasonal basis. The waterfront is an ideal location for a much needed convention center to host the smaller one day conventions and trade shows that may be displaced with the expansion of the Baltimore Convention Center and the potential expansion of the Timonium Fairgrounds. A cultural heritage museum could showcase the proud and unique history of the area by highlighting the industrial giants, the immigration of workers and the subsequent growth and development of communities, the war effort, the value of the Chesapeake Bay, the high tech future of manufacturing, and the present day quality of life in Eastern Baltimore County. The shops, restaurants, and waterfront activity would be an added bonus that could make this one of the best destinations in the upper Chesapeake Bay.

The drawing below is an example of what such an attraction might look like. This is not an actual proposal, but a concept plan meant





Waterfront Enhancement

to spark the imagination to explore opportunities for a waterfront destination built upon the area's attributes. A preliminary review of the waterfront has identified the Chesapeake Industrial Park at Dark Head Creek as a potential location because of its size, developability, deep water access, fairly direct access to major roadways, and buffering from adjacent residential communities. The County through the Department of Economic Development and/or the private sector should engage a marketing consultant to pursue these concepts and further examine their feasibility. A waterfront destination advisory group composed of business, community, and governmental representatives should be formed to finalize a concept and site. Other waterfront areas should also be investigated as alternative or supplemental sites.

2. Develop Shoreline Destination Points

a. The Office of Planning, in conjunction with the Departments of Environmental Protection and Resource Management, Recreation and Parks, and Economic Development, the Marine Trades Association, and interested community and business associations, should identify sites where zoning, water depth, ownership, land use, community character, environmental constraints, proximity to other uses, etc., would be appropriate to encourage development of small waterfront destinations. These uses could include day slips, shops, seasonal stands, restaurants, docking facilities, or recreational facilities such as pools, beaches, picnic areas, etc. Practical strategies to develop these areas --- use of specialized funds, coordination of dredging projects, design assistance, assistance with environmental regulations --- would then be formulated with interested property owners.

b. The Department of Recreation and Parks should review its holdings and potential acquisitions with the goal of creating or improving them as waterfront destinations.

WATERFRONT PARKS

There are over 20 publicly owned waterfront parks in Eastern Baltimore County which, as Map 12 shows, are distributed fairly evenly along the shoreline. The largest parks are generally at the end of the Necks and should be easily accessible from the Chesapeake Bay. These parks offer some of the best recreational opportunities in the County including active community based recreation at Merritt Point Park, the historic battlements of Fort Howard, the unique estuarine ecosystem found in North Point Peninsula State Park, golf courses and Ballestone Mansion at Rocky Point, and a nature center and extensive wetlands creation sites at Days Cove. Appendix E contains a brief description of the primary parks in Eastern Baltimore County as well as a listing of school recreation centers, community centers, neighborhood parks, state parks, and recreation and park councils.

The strategic issues for waterfront park enhancement are the continued maintenance and upgrading of the existing system, development of the Dundee-Salt peter Park, and improvement of the water accessibility and linkages among parks.

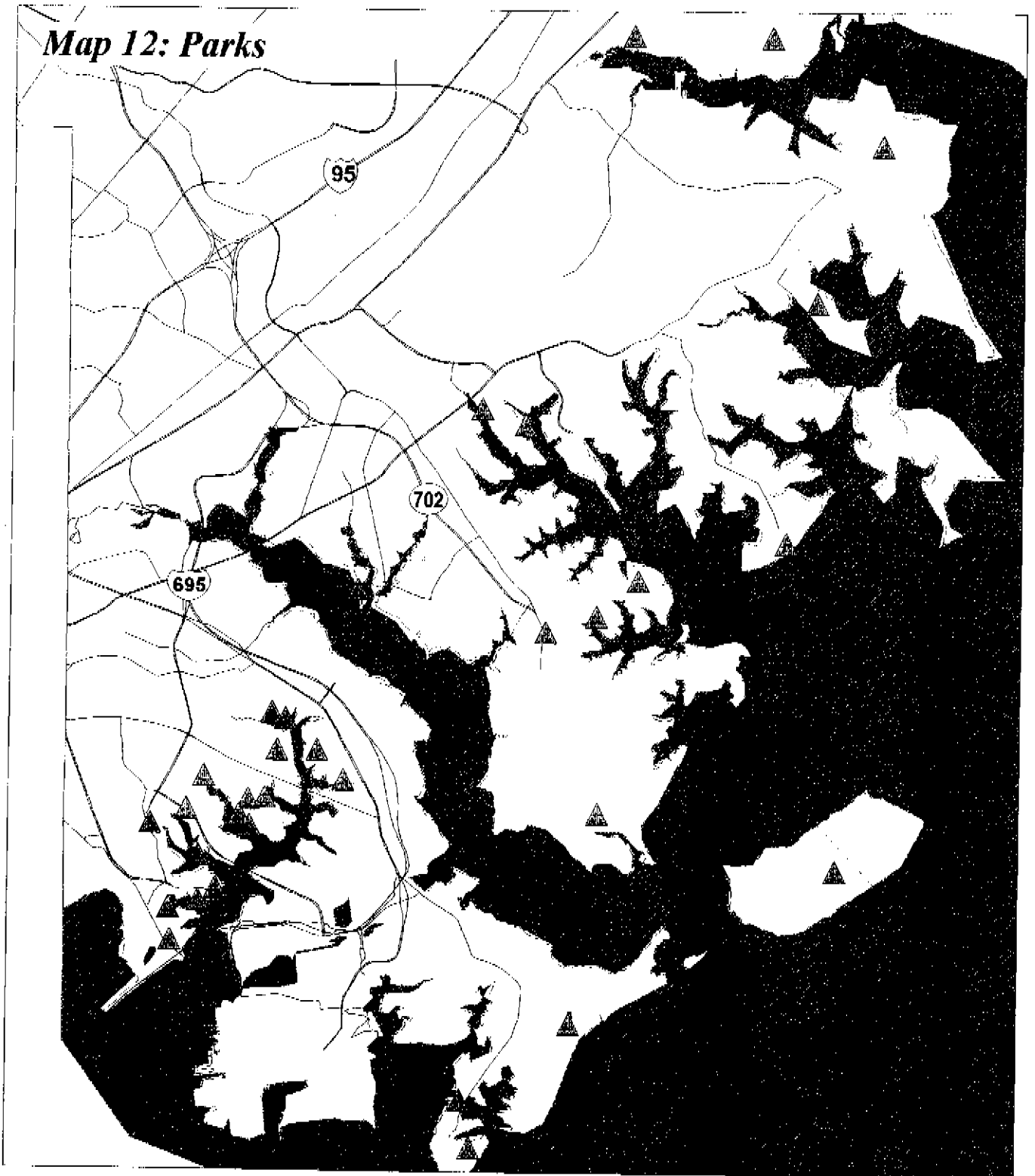
RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Begin Development of Dundee-Salt peter Park

Dundee-Salt peter Park, also known as Marshy Point, is a 492.5 acre undeveloped park site on



Map 12: Parks





Waterfront Enhancement

the peninsula formed by the Dundee and Saltpeter Creeks, south of the Gunpowder State Park. Phased development of the park is expected to begin in 1997 and when completed, will feature extensive nature-oriented and interpretive facilities including canoe "trails", wildlife observation areas, and a nature/interpretive center.

2. Initiate Enterprise Park Program

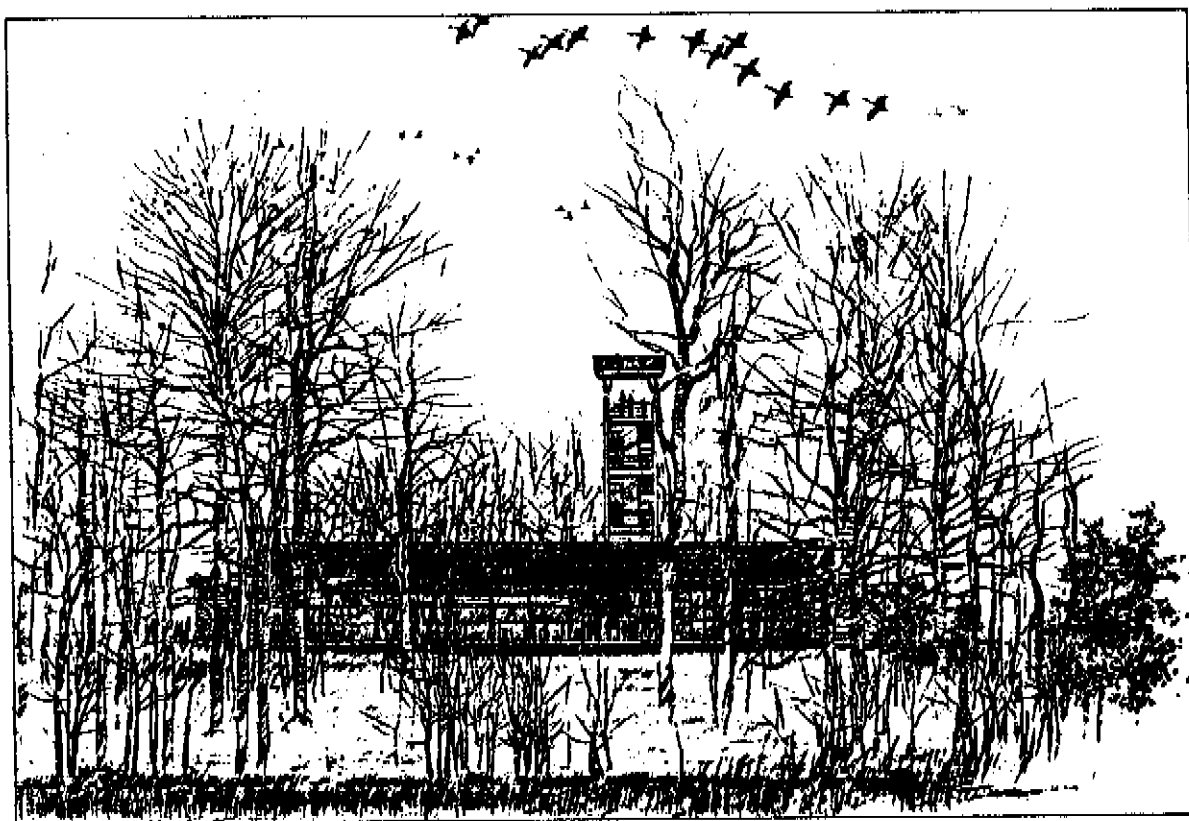
The Department of Recreation and Parks has initiated an enterprise fund park program for Rocky Point Park, Fort Howard, and Miami Beach. Under this program, the parks are operated on the funds they generate and are not dependent upon tax dollars. It is recommended that consideration be given to expanding this creative approach where feasible.

3. Increase Waterfront Accessibility

As part of the recommendation to develop shoreline destination points (See "Waterfront Destination" section), the Department of Recreation and Parks should evaluate its sites for water accessibility, including boat ramps and day slips.

4. Promote Linkages Among Parks

The "triangle" formed by Rocky Point Park, Hart-Miller Island, and the North Point Peninsula (including the State Park, Fort Howard and commercial uses on Millers Island) should be promoted as a waterfront destination point.





The area should be marketed as such in all waterfront promotional material, each park should be evaluated for improved accessibility, additional programs should be developed to attract boaters specifically, and commercial uses on Millers Island should be encouraged to market and link themselves to the boating community. Proposals for Porters Beach/Rocky Point Parks should be evaluated, in part, as to how well they improve waterfront accessibility and foster waterfront linkages.

Additional opportunities for park linkages to be promoted are among Rocky Point Park, Pottery Farm and Sue Creek Parks, and Turkey Point Park via the multi-use Paradise Farm Trail and also between Dundee-Saltpeter Park and the Gunpowder State Park. All park plans should be reviewed for ways to improve these important connections with the goal of creating interesting waterfront destinations.

MARINE TRADE INDUSTRY

Baltimore County's recreational marine industry generates over \$130 million per year with a total employment of over 1,300 people. Businesses in the industry include about 70 marinas and yacht clubs with about 6,600 total slips; marine sales, repair, and maintenance businesses; wholesale and retail suppliers; yacht brokers; etc. About 30% of the boats kept in the water in Baltimore County are owned by non-county residents who generate over \$65 million in tourism. These statistics are part of an outside study commissioned in 1994 by the Marine Trade Association of Baltimore County, with funding from the Department of Economic Development, on the economic impact of the recreational marine industry on the County. The results show that the industry has a significant impact on the

economies of Baltimore County and the State of Maryland. As such, the value of the industry should be recognized and supported.

Over the last five years, slip rentals and sales have been declining and local owners suspect that this is due, in part, to competition from new large marinas on the Eastern Shore. It appears that boaters leave the area for destinations with attractions that provide entertainment for the entire family such as stores, restaurants, pools, golf courses, events, etc. Many of the actions that Baltimore County and the marine industry need to take to capitalize upon the Eastern Area's own waterfront attractions are addressed elsewhere in this Chapter (See "Waterfront Destinations" and "Waterfront Promotion"). The upgrading of marina facilities themselves is a separate and possibly more difficult issue. Most of the marinas in Baltimore County are small and older and lack the amenities sought by today's boaters. Some operators have reconfigured their piers to create larger slips for the more popular larger boats, but upland improvements need to follow. A number of marinas don't have the land, capital, or desire to expand. Those that do have to comply with the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law, which regulates but does not necessarily prohibit, expansions and creations of marinas as well as uses allowed in the 100 foot shoreline buffer.

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Marine Trade Association should continue to act as an advocate for marina operators.

Over the past year, they have worked with County agencies to eliminate bootleg marinas, create more flexible zoning, and develop an expedited review process for marinas proposing minor expansions. This



Waterfront Enhancement

lowers many of the hurdles to redeveloping and improving a site. The Association should encourage individual operators to improve and add amenities to their operations, especially when they are near to or offer attractions such as restaurants, bars, or recreational activities. The Association should also be active participants in plans to develop waterfront destination areas. (See "Waterfront Destination" section)

WATERFRONT PROMOTION

Eastern Baltimore County, especially the waterfront, is home and host to a number of interesting and exciting events, activities, and uses throughout the year. Many appeal to a wide audience and are family-oriented such as the Chesapeake Air Show, Riverfest, and the Living History Weekend at Ballestone Manor. Others are more seasonal and specific such as the new Fantasy of Lights at Ft. Howard, swimming and boating all along the shoreline, or the re-enactment of the Battle of North Point. And year round, there are the educational and cultural opportunities at Essex and Dundalk Community Colleges, fine and casual dining establishments, and numerous parks offering a variety of activities.

These activities can foster a strong sense of community, stimulate the local economy, and contribute to a positive image of the area. But there are important issues of promoting and publicizing these events, directing people to and throughout the area, and linking these events to the existing businesses, shops, restaurants, parks, etc., in the area.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Publish Promotional Information

The Eastern Baltimore Area Community Development Corporation in conjunction with the County (specifically the Departments of Economic Development and Recreation and Parks and the Office of Community Conservation) should produce a promotional video and/or brochure about the area, highlighting and profiling economic development opportunities, the communities, and recreational and waterfront amenities. These should be used in marketing the area to potential businesses or homeowners. Funding shall be through public-private partnerships.

2. Implement Waterfront Directional Sign Program

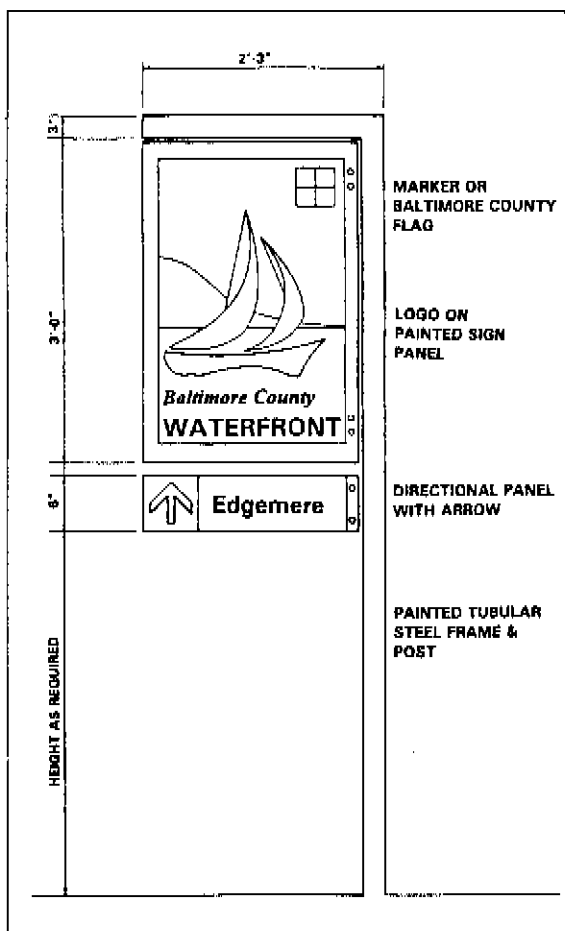
The Office of Planning, in conjunction with the Departments of Economic Development, Public Works, and Recreation and Parks should continue to implement the unified waterfront directional sign program. This program calls for the placement of three types of signage throughout Eastern Baltimore County to direct visitors to the various points of interest. It includes:

- a. "Trailblazer" signs displaying "Baltimore County" along with a waterfront logo and a directional arrow. These signs would be placed within the public right-of-way of arterial State or County roads, such as Route 702, that lead to or through Eastern Baltimore County.
- b. "Community" signs displaying the name of the community along with the waterfront logo



and a directional arrow. These signs would be placed within the public right-of-way of State and County roads to direct visitors to a specific part of the waterfront, at locations where a turn is necessary to reach that part of the waterfront.

c. "Destination Directional" signs that would show the name of individual marinas, boat-yards, waterfront restaurants, parks and historic sites along with the waterfront logo and a directional arrow. These signs would be located on private property along local roads within the waterfront areas. This type of sign is permitted by special exception on private property.



WATER QUALITY PROTECTION

In 1984, the State of Maryland passed the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law which required local jurisdictions along the Bay to develop plans, programs, and legislation to implement the State's environmental protection criteria. The resulting regulations are the overriding factor for most land use decisions on the waterfront. In 1995, the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management, in conjunction with the Critical Area Commission and local community and business interests, evaluated the County's overall programs and regulations to improve and streamline the process. These recommendations have been approved by the Commission and should facilitate minor development that can enhance the waterfront uses and image and still protect the area's natural resources and water quality. The Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management has drafted these changes in three bills and associated policies which are currently before the County Council. In addition to the Critical Area program, the Department also administers a number of other important water quality protection programs to control non-point water pollution sources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Streamline Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program

The bills introduced to the County Council in the beginning of 1996 will simplify and coordinate the County's Critical Area review process in the following manner:

a. Mesh Critical Area definitions and implementation procedures with other County environmental regulations, i.e., Forest Conserva-



Waterfront Enhancement

tion Regulations and Regulations for the Protection of Water Quality, Streams, Wetlands and Floodplains.

- b. Mesh Critical Area implementation procedures with the zoning variance and new County development review processes and streamline review procedures by eliminating separate and redundant Critical Area "findings plans".
- c. Provide for a Buffer Management Plan to streamline building permit review procedures and address citizen concerns about development in nonfunctional buffers.
- d. Provide for a simplified technical review of minor marina expansions.
- e. Clarify procedures for the review of piers, structures on piers, and shore erosion protection measures.
- f. Clarify sections of the Critical Area regulations which are difficult to interpret.
- g. Add a 10% pollutant reduction offset program for Intensely Developed Areas.
- h. Add protective covenants for important natural resources.
- i. Allow subdivision to occur on properties already containing dwellings without utilizing any of the County's limited growth allocation acreage.
- j. Add an intrafamily transfer process in RC-20 and RC-50 zones.

2. Require Consistency between Strategy and County's Growth Allocation Process

Under the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program's Growth Allocation process, about 158

acres of land classified as Resource Conservation Areas may be developed to the Limited Development or Intensely Developed Areas standards and about 150 acres of land classified as Limited Development Area may be developed to the Intensely Developed Area standards. All growth allocation proposals should be reviewed for consistency with this Revitalization Strategy.

3. Implement Comprehensive Water Quality Programs

Baltimore County should continue to implement programs for the control of non-point sources of water pollution -- including nutrients, toxins, and sediments -- which contribute to degradation of water quality and ecosystem dysfunction. These programs include compliance with the federally-mandated National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Storm Water Permit and participation in the Maryland Tributary Strategies for Nutrient Reduction. County actions which address water quality problems in the Eastern Revitalization area include regulations to protect streams and other sensitive natural features, and the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area; capital restoration projects for conversion and retrofit of storm water management facilities, shore erosion control, stream restoration, and reforestation; and operating and maintenance programs, including storm drain inlet cleaning and illicit connection screening, community clean-ups, and citizen education/action projects. Action priorities should continue to be established for these programs through the Department of Environmental Protection and Resource Management's comprehensive watershed management planning. See Appendix C for a map showing the waterfront capital improvements projects.